

Emotions, media discourse and the mobilization of citizens: conceptual considerations and a plausibility probe

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Emotions, Media Discourse and the Mobilization of Citizens

Conceptual Considerations and a Plausibility Probe

Marianne van de Steeg

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EMOTIONS, MEDIA DISCOURSE AND THE MOBILIZATION OF CITIZENS

CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS AND A PLAUSIBILITY PROBE

Marianne van de Steeg

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Abstract

The political game in the European Union has changed. Nowadays, EU issues are politicized in the public mass arena and demand from the European leadership more than the traditional, thin top-down communication. Concerns about the European democratic deficit and the legitimacy of the EU have made it important to engage citizens in EU issues and actively win their support.

Since citizens almost never have firsthand experience with EU issues, they are most likely to pick up political cues from media discourse. Several events have shown that many citizens have only recently discovered the implications of European integration. Apparently, much of the media discourse on EU issues emanating from unpoliticized consensual decision-making in interest-based arenas does not reach the citizens. By comparing the media discourse on the few EU issues in which citizens have become activated and engaged – either to challenge or to support European decision-making – with media discourse that has not engaged citizens, the mechanism can be unraveled that explains the conditions under which citizens most effectively become politically active regarding EU issues.

It is expected that a discourse that is highly loaded with emotions is more likely to reach citizens' hearts and minds, and thus lead to political action, than the usual technical and consensual manner of presenting European decision-making. Insights from collective action research and on media effect research are used to operationalize the key-concept "emotions". Media discourse that generates sufficient arousal to attract the citizens' attention and interest and that invokes the identity of an imagined community in relation to a sense of agency and injustice is most likely to mobilize European citizens, even on an EU issue.

The Author



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1. The Politicization of European Politics¹

The sudden bottom-up mobilization of citizens against the Constitutional Treaty and the Bolkestein directive took the European political elite by surprise. In the decades prior to these events the media had regularly reported on European summits and on the statements made by the national leaders who also represent the European political elite. This type of discourse, however, hardly touches citizens' hearts and minds. Only at the time of the referendum on the Constitutional Treaty, for example, did many Dutch citizens realize that European Treaties override national law, including the Dutch Constitution. Moreover, it took half a century and the Bolkestein directive² to mobilize citizens across Europe to challenge one of the main goals of European integration, namely the free movement of services, a fundamental and hitherto uncontroversial principle laid down years ago in the Rome Treaty. These events highlighted the importance of engaging with citizens on EU issues and actively winning their support. Therefore, the European political leadership cannot expect a return to passive citizen support for EU integration. Those political entrepreneurs (such as politicians, political commentators, civil society activists and journalists) who can mobilize citizens around their ideas on the European Union's future will be able to set the political agenda for European decision-making in the years to come. Thick top-down and bottom-up communication between citizens and their elected representatives is essential for democratic decision-making in EU multi-level governance, just as it is in national contexts. The goal of this working paper is to develop a new research program to analyze ways of connecting citizens and their political representatives that have proven to be most effective. As an illustration of how such a research program could unfold a first small empirical analysis is made in the second part of this paper.

The commotion caused by the Constitutional Treaty and the Bolkestein directive ushered in a new type of citizen participation in European political life, showing that it is possible for political entrepreneurs to raise awareness and mobilize European citizens. Apparently, citizens can be mobilized on an EU issue despite claims put forward in the European democratic deficit literature from the 1990s. The EU was said to be too distant and too complex for citizens to understand European politics and to identify with it (see Follesdal/Hix 2006: 536 for a summary). According to Moravcsik, citizens are interested in other issue areas than those dealt with by the EU, "so any effort to expand participation is unlikely to overcome apathy" (Moravcsik 2002: 615). Mobilization is not dependent on institutional prerequisites – although the differences in institutional

1 The Kolleg-Forschergruppe (KFG) „The Transformative Power of Europe“, hosted at the Freie Universität Berlin, has given me the opportunity to develop the research program entailed in this working paper. The KFG is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and brings together research on the diffusion of ideas in the EU's internal and external relations. For further information, please consult www.transformeurope.eu. Especially, I want to thank the KFG's Jour Fixe for giving me the feedback that was essential for turning a good idea into a research program. In the process of developing the research program on the effect of emotions on citizen mobilization and writing this paper, I benefited from discussions with Silke Adam, Eva Heidebreder, Juan Diez Medrano, Jan Henrik Meyer, Ton Nijhuis, Swantje Renfordt, Thomas Risse, Vivien Schmidt, participants at the *Medien und internationale Beziehungen* conference in Mannheim 11-13 February 2010, and, of course, from the constructive critical comments made by an anonymous reviewer.

2 Commissioner Bolkestein proposed a directive with which to liberalize the European service sector. By introducing the "homeland" principle, it would be easier for a company from the service sector to work in any EU member state. Critics pointed out that service companies from Western Europe would have to lay off people or could go bankrupt if the infamous „Polish plumber“ works in Western Europe while abiding by Polish instead of French or German regulations.

set-up between the EU and national democracies may have a negative effect on European mobilization – nor is mobilization intrinsic to a specific issue. Many EU issues dispose of qualities that when spotlighted by a political entrepreneur may convince citizens of the personal relevance of those issues to their lives. Depending on the objectives of the political entrepreneur, this may go either way: against or in favor of EU decision-making.

The political entrepreneurs who mobilized citizens against the Constitutional Treaty and against the Bolkestein directive most likely relied on another type of discourse than the usual manner in which the mainstream European political leadership has made public statements on EU issues. In order to discover the mechanism that explains under which conditions citizens engage in EU politics and become politically active, we need to find out what type of statements made by which political actors in the media stimulate citizen involvement. Combining insights from political science and collective action theory with research into media effect, the idea behind this research program is that an emotionally loaded discourse is more likely to reach citizens' hearts and minds, and thus lead to political action, than the usual technical and consensual manner of presenting European decision-making processes.

This working paper proceeds as follows. First, the argument is made that politicization and the political involvement of European citizens (or the absence thereof) are not intrinsic to an issue, or, for that matter, to EU decision-making as such. The mobilization of citizens depends on the specific actions of political entrepreneurs undertaken to politicize an issue. It is the political discourse developed by certain political entrepreneurs that politicize an issue. If we want to learn how political entrepreneurs mobilize citizens, we have to analyze political discourse. Media discourse is the most likely candidate. This paper posits a model that explains how statements by political entrepreneurs in the media may have an effect on citizens' political behavior. Emotionally loaded media discourse is expected to play an important role in this process. Where emotions come in and how they are constituted is theorized by referring to insights from collective action theory and media effect research. In the second part of this paper, as a plausibility probe, an analysis is made of two EU issues. The first issue, concerning the decision of the European leadership to impose sanctions on an Austrian government that would include Haider's FPÖ, mobilized many European citizens in 2000. The second issue, the integration of the Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) into the EU, was on the top of the European agenda in the same period, but did not lead to any mass involvement. This issue can be regarded as an example of the usual public communication on European politics.

2. The “Who” and “How” of Politicization: Discursive Actions by Political Entrepreneurs

The European leadership has yet to come to terms with the fact that the political game has changed (Hooghe/Marks 2005; Hooghe 2007; Mittag/Wessels 2003). In the aftermath of the Maastricht Treaty permissive consensus has turned into a constraining dissensus (Hooghe/Marks 2008). In the eyes of many citizens the legitimacy of the EU is called into question (Hix 2005; Mittag/Wessels 2003). An academic debate has opened up on what is called the “politicization” of EU decision-making (Bartolini 2005; Follesdal/Hix 2006; Mair 2005; Moravcsik 2006). Public opinion on European integration has become politically relevant for party competition, especially in those member states with populist Eurosceptic parties. Beforehand,

citizens who preferred a stop on European integration had only pro-EU mainstream parties to choose from. Van der Eijk and Franklin (2004) called this a “sleeping giant”: a reservoir of preferences without political representation. The sleeping giant is waking up now. Ever since Maastricht various EU issues have entered the public mass arena rather than being dealt with purely within the interest-based arenas of elite decision-making.

Most issues that became politicized have mobilized citizens against proposals for further European integration. The Bolkestein directive as well as the referendums in France and the Netherlands on the Constitutional Treaty are cases in point. On the other hand, citizens have occasionally become politically active in order to defend “their” EU, such as during the Haider affair in February 2000. In other words, even though so far citizens usually mobilized to express dissatisfaction with European integration, the Haider affair is an example to the contrary. It indicates that when citizens are emotionally touched by discourse made by pro-EU political entrepreneurs, mobilization in favor of decision-making by the EU leadership may take place. Unfortunately for democracy and European integration, until recently there has been hardly any communicative interaction regarding the progress of European integration between Europe’s political elite and its citizens. Political leaders have been discursively unpersuasive in comparison to the “no” camp (Schmidt 2010). Even if the European political elite would like EU issues to remain in the interest based arena, this is to no effect when other political entrepreneurs politicize the issue. “Whether an issue enters mass politics depends not on its intrinsic importance, but on whether a political party picks it up” (Hooghe/Marks 2008: 18). However, Hooghe and Marks only tell us half the story. They are right that there is a need for entrepreneurs (who may also stem from civil society) who see an opportunity for political gain by mobilizing citizens’ latent preferences for their cause. This is the “who”. What still needs to be identified is the “how”. What is the mechanism? With what type of statements do which political entrepreneurs mobilize citizens on an EU issue?

The key is to examine the political discourse itself. The study of how ideas transform into words and then lead to deeds has so far been neglected by political science, as Schmidt (2008) argues. That is where collective action theory and media effect research come in, since their focus is precisely on how words lead to deeds. Both strands of literature teach us, though conceptualized in a different manner, that at least in national politics emotions in discourse have the power to change words into deeds. Collective action theory (Gamson 1992, Klandermans 2002) uses the concepts of injustice, agency and identity: cognitions loaded with emotion. In media effect research, emotions are referred to as “affect” and are broken down into the concepts of arousal (i.e. level of emotions) and valence (i.e. direction of emotions). Whether emotions lead to words becoming deeds in EU politics can be disclosed by comparing the media discourse preceding citizens’ active political involvement with an EU issue to the media discourse on issues for which public mobilization remained weak.

Media discourse serves a dual function in such a research program. First, media discourse is a source of information for citizens. When citizens try to make sense of an issue, they often use media discourse (Gamson 1992). The media discourse created by political entrepreneurs (including the media itself as a political entrepreneur) may or may not include three ingredients that increase the likelihood of collective action - identity, injustice and agency. It may or may not be presented in such an arousing manner that it is picked up by the citizen and has an effect on his/her manner of thinking about the issue. Media discourse as a source of information available to citizens to make up their minds on an issue is the independent

variable in this study. Thus, it is measured prior to the media discourse used to measure the dependent variable of citizens' political behavior for this plausibility probe. The assumption to be tested is whether media discourse on an EU issue loaded with the kind of emotions identified by collective action theory and media effect research creates a favorable climate for inducing citizens to become politically active (in the direction propagated by the most influential political entrepreneur).

Second, media discourse is also a repository of social events. The media sometimes reports on political activities by citizens, such as demonstrations, petitions or letters to the editor. Of course, most political activities by citizens go by without creating media resonance. The media makes a selection that is biased towards news value considerations and their editorial line. Despite these limitations, media discourse is for this plausibility probe a useful and easily accessible source to list the public political actions that citizens have undertaken in the past. Future research should include other sources of information on citizens' political behavior, but for this plausibility probe, it serves as a proxy for the extent to which citizens have become mobilized. A comparison is made between the reported citizens' political behavior for the mass mobilization issue and the reported citizens' political behavior for the other important EU issue that was selected for the same time period. In the research program (but not in the plausibility probe in the second part of this paper) it is foreseen that the conclusions from the content analysis of the media discourse are tested by way of an experiment. Via this experiment, the array of political behavior the respondents feel inclined to undertake (such as talking with friends and family about the issue or participating in protest demonstrations) after having been exposed to media discourse can be measured. Meanwhile, the content analysis presented in this paper relates identity constructions (in relation to injustice and agency) as well as the level of arousal in media discourse prior to mobilization to proxies for citizens' political behavior (such as the number of letters to the editor and reports on citizens' involvement) from the moment, respectively, the mass or low level of mobilization started.

3. Arousing Media Discourse on Identity Increases the Likelihood of Political Action

Political entrepreneurs are likely to mobilize citizens on EU issues via the mass media. Scholars in the field of the Europeanization of public spheres concluded that mass media published within the EU facilitates public debate on EU issues across differences in language, national boundaries and media systems (e.g. Dereje et al. 2003; Eder/Kantner 2000; Koopmans/Erbe 2004; Van de Steeg/Risse 2010; Trenz/Münzing 2003; Van de Steeg 2006, 2010). Political cueing and framing in media discourse on EU issues can be influential, especially because citizens themselves generally have hardly any firsthand experience with transnational EU politics (Hooghe/Marks 2004, 2005; for more general background see also Zaller 1992, Zucker 1978).

The role media discourse plays in people's understanding of political issues has been demonstrated in Gamson's study (1992) on how US working class people (known to have low levels of political interest, of education and of news consumption) discuss politics with each other. He showed that working class people even drew on media discourse in discussions on issues for which they had firsthand experience. Let alone, when they discussed an issue such as the Arab-Israeli conflict. This was an issue for which they hardly had any firsthand experience, but by many groups it was discussed as an issue with high proximity by drawing parallels between what they learned from the media and what they knew and felt about other objectively more proximate issues. The situation will be similar for many EU citizens regarding EU politics.

Because of a lack of firsthand experience, cues and frames will be predominantly picked up from media discourse. In the process, a sense of proximity to an EU issue is constructed.

Regrettably, the study of the effect of media discourse on citizens' political behavior regarding the EU is still in its infancy. We know from the few available experimental studies that media discourse on EU issues has an effect on the level of support given to specific decisions (De Vreese/Boomgaarden 2003, 2006; Maier/Rittberger 2008; Schuck/De Vreese 2006) as well as for the EU itself (Bruter 2003). The fact that media discourse frames an EU issue negatively or positively influences people's opinion. However, whether this change in attitude leads to a change in level and direction of political involvement and ultimately to a change in political behavior is unknown.

In order to empirically test whether media discourse on an EU issue, besides affecting attitude, might also lead to a change in behavior, a more sophisticated research design than the experiments published in the academic literature is needed. First of all, the dependent variable should neither stop at attitude, nor at opinion, but should include political behavior, preferably actual political behavior. For the latter, this plausibility probe offers a content analysis of media discourse, since the media includes a (small and biased) selection of citizens' actual political actions in its reports. Second, even if the tone of media discourse is positive for European integration in general, many citizens could still be mobilized by political entrepreneurs against European integration, as their political statements may be better tailored or capture the citizens' hearts.

The main hypothesis in this research program is that the more emotionally loaded political statements in the media are, the more likely citizens become engaged and undertake political actions that are picked up by the media (i.e. writing letters to the editor or participating in manifestations). Emotions in media discourse relate both to what is said and how it is said. Drawing on collective action theory, the "what" is defined as the manner in which media discourse mobilizes identity and relates it to injustice and agency. For the "how", insights from media effect research are used that teach us what aspects of media discourse generate the kind of arousal that activates citizens.

For people who want to join in a collective action, the necessary ingredients are a combination of injustice, identity and agency: cognitions charged with emotion (Gamson 1992; Klandermans/Goslinga 1996; Polletta/Jasper 2001). In this trio, "identity" is actually two-sided. It refers to the construction of a "we"-group as well as to the construction of an adversarial "they"-group. Chances are higher that citizens rally around the flag of the "we", when also an adversarial has been identified. Klandermans and Goslinga (1996) showed, for example, that prior to mass mobilizations on the Dutch welfare system, the Dutch trade unions were able to spread the message that they were in opposition to the government and its plans to change the Disability Insurance Act (*WAO* in Dutch) via the mass media. It was crucial for the Dutch trade unions that they were depicted to their constituency as a "we"-group with which a citizen may identify against the plans the government (the "they") had in store for the country. Political action requires an awareness that injustice has been inflicted upon the group of people of which the person himself feels to be a part of (the "we"-group set against a "they" that serves as a target) plus a consciousness of agency, namely that if "we" undertake action, things will change for the better. References to a group identity mobilize this "we", which is essential for a sense of injustice and agency to lead to collective action. The identity of a political community, also an EU political identity, is mobilized while debating issues considered relevant for that community (Calhoun 2002; Eisenstadt/Giesen 1995; Habermas 1995; Kantner 2004; Van de Steeg/

Risse 2010; Van de Steeg 2010). Gamson (1992: 171) noticed that even a geographically distant issue can gain proximity and engagement. The expectation is that media discourse on identity that mobilizes a “we” against a “they” and relates it to injustice and agency increases the amount of political behavior on an EU issue.

A discourse needs to contain the identification of a community (either via a “we” or a “they”), the pointing out of an injustice, and a reference to agency if a framing that is conducive to collective action is to arise (Klandermans/Goslinga 1996). Media discourse contains hardly ever all these elements, but may occasionally play a facilitative role in social mobilization (Gamson 1992). Whether a citizen, after hearing the message of a political entrepreneur, becomes mobilized and undertakes political action also depends on other circumstances such as the individual disposition towards collective action, the cultural context and interpersonal interactions with other members of the group to which the individual citizen feels to belong to (Klandermans/Goslinga 1996; Schenk 2002). For an individual citizen, besides media discourse also other sources of information may be used to make sense of an issue. However, media discourse is the most important instrument for many political entrepreneurs to reach their constituency and the mass public with their message (Klandermans/Goslinga 1996). Therefore, in order to understand citizens’ political behavior, it is necessary to measure whether messages by political entrepreneurs that invoke all ingredients of a collective action frame resonated in the mass media.

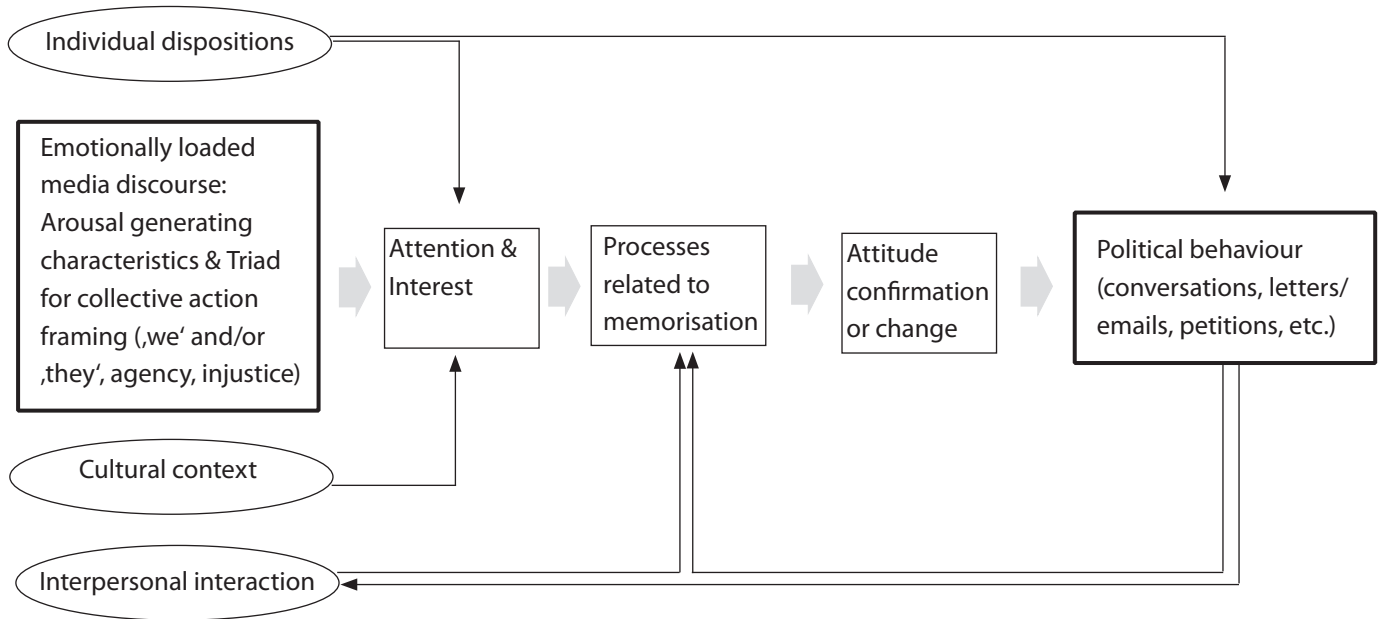
Besides the content – i.e. what is being said by whom – the way it is said also matters. A media statement by a political entrepreneur has to overcome many hurdles before it has an effect on the citizen’s attitude towards an issue and could affect political behavior. A statement (or a media stimulus, in the terms of media effect research) first has to draw the citizen’s attention and be read (or listened to). After the citizen is aware of the statement, the statement also has to stimulate the citizen’s interest. Only those statements that are formulated in such a manner that they stimulate the citizen’s attention and interest may start the trajectory that leads to the memorization of aspects of the statement in relation to knowledge and beliefs the citizen already had acquired (McGuire 2001). Along the way, certain aspects of the statement are selected, they are judged according to importance and relevance to remember them. After an individual selection and interpretation of a media statement is memorized, it needs to be retrieved later in order to guide the decision of citizens whether to act or not. The chance that a media statement by a political entrepreneur attracts the citizen’s attention and interest and starts the trajectory towards memorization and subsequent retrieval when a decision to undertake action is made, depends on the level of arousal generated by the media statement.

Everything else remaining equal, media discourse that generates a level of arousal that activates citizens is more likely to be read, processed and integrated in the cognitive maps in their memory (Bandura 2009; Christ 2006; Graber 1988; Schenk 2002; Zillmann 1996). Media discourse that hardly generates arousal – i.e. media discourse that is dull and boring – is likely not to be read or listened to, and even if it was, it will not be remembered. On the other hand, while media discourse that creates much arousal is likely to attract attention, yet too much arousal causes a cognitive deficit. After arousal has been high, we need some time to become sufficiently calm to be able to take in new information (Zillmann 1988). Therefore, it is an empirical question as to what the adequate level of arousal for activation might be.

Following the findings from previous research (Bruter 2003; De Vreese/Boomgaarden 2003, 2006; Maier/

Rittberger 2008; Schuck/De Vreese 2006), it is expected that media discourse influences citizens' attitudes and that the direction of citizens' political behavior in favor or against an EU issue is similar to the direction in the (highly emotionally loaded) political statements. Since the results from previous research are accepted, they are not included in the model to be tested, although they will be measured in future research. Putting the "what" and "how" of emotions in media discourse together results in the following model:

Model 1: How emotionally loaded media discourse may lead to political action



The main line in this model runs horizontally from "emotionally loaded media stimuli" via the black box of processes related to memorization to "political behavior". However, whether a political statement presented in the media is being picked up by citizens and leads to action also depends on other independent variables such as individual dispositions (e.g. familiarity with the issue, personal involvement, commitment to the political entrepreneur who made the statement, and preparedness to take part in various forms of collective action), the cultural context and interpersonal interaction with others who are identified by the individual to belong to the same social group. Individual dispositions also explain that for some a change in attitude is reflected in political behavior, while others will not undertake any political actions. Finally, certain effects of having displayed political behavior feed back into the model. Political activities, even such simple political behavior as talking with others about an issue, stimulate the interpersonal interaction and the development of a position on a certain issue. Moreover, having been actively involved increases the chances that in the future media statements which are similar in terms of content and/or political entrepreneur attract attention and interest and thus may lead to future political behavior (Klandermans/Goslinga 1996).

As a first stage, the three boxes highlighted with a thicker black line are measured in a content analysis, guided by the following questions: Which media discourse on EU issues contains statements loaded with the emotions identified by both collective action theory and media effect research? And which media discourse on EU issues does not contain all these characteristics and is therefore expected not to lead

to political action? Finally, what kind of actual political behavior by citizens is reported on each issue in the media? In a second stage the results from the content analysis can be used as hypotheses to be tested in an experiment with a pre-test and post-test design that includes questions related to the intervening independent variables identified in the model (i.e. individual dispositions, cultural context and interpersonal interaction).

Many of the relations displayed in the above model have already been corroborated by collective action and/or media effect research in relation to national politics in Western societies. The purpose of this research program is to test whether the knowledge of what triggers citizens' political behavior in a national context can also predict when and how citizens become politically active in relation to European multi-level decision-making. The main expectation to be tested is that media arousal and identity discourse (i.e. the identification of a community via a "we" and/or a "they" in combination with agency and injustice) are both necessary variables, but on their own are not sufficient to bring about citizens' active involvement. Identity discourse needs to be combined with high media arousal in order to activate citizens to discuss EU politics. In order to measure whether this assumption is correct, two types of issues are to be selected: issues that mobilized many citizens and issues that at the same time were also high on the EU's agenda, but did not lead to much political action by citizens. The latter reflects the public resonance that so far most EU issues yielded. The list from which issues with mass mobilization (and thus, high citizen involvement) can be selected is short.

The theoretical expectations are confirmed if the following two conditions are fulfilled:

1. If we find for the issue that mobilized many citizens that there is both a high level of media arousal and a high level of identity discourse immediately prior to mobilization.
2. And, simultaneously, if we find for the issue that hardly mobilized citizens that at least the level of media arousal or the level of identity discourse is low; if both independent variables score low it would also confirm the theoretical expectations.

The theoretical expectations are falsified, if we will find exactly the opposite, namely a low level of media discourse and identity discourse for the issue with much citizen involvement or a high level of media discourse and a high level of identity discourse for the issue with hardly any citizen involvement. In case we find in relation to the issue with high citizen involvement that media arousal is low or that identity discourse is low, then the theoretical assumption that media arousal and identity discourse are both necessary independent variables, but alone not sufficient, should be reconsidered. Any finding that differs from the two above stated conditions is an invitation to revise the theoretical model and the conceptual considerations that led to the model.

In the second part of this working paper, the proposed model will be illustrated with data from two case studies (the Haider affair as an issue with high citizen involvement and the CEEC enlargement as an important EU issue that in the same period as the Haider affair led to hardly any citizen involvement). It has to be kept in mind that this is just an empirical illustration. The depth of the analysis and the quality of the material analyzed do not allow for drawing any firm conclusions on the relation between emotions in media discourse and citizens' political behavior. Nevertheless, the exercise will hopefully enable a better understanding of this research program and make a contribution to our knowledge about public engagement with European politics and the role media discourse plays in it.

4. Research Design

Issue selection: the Haider affair and CEEC enlargement

The issue of the Haider affair and the sanctions against the first Austrian ÖVP-FPÖ government was selected as an EU issue with high public involvement. On this issue, the political elite was able to stimulate mass support for the European ideals. The Haider affair concerned the political crisis unleashed in the EU when Jörg Haider's right-wing and populist FPÖ entered the Austrian government in February 2000. The other EU member states agreed to impose some diplomatic sanctions against the Austrian government to protest the decision to let this party - accused of xenophobia and Nazism - participate in the government. Between January 2000 and the lifting of the sanctions in September 2000, a Europe-wide debate followed on the legitimacy of the EU's intermingling in the domestic politics of a member state.

The issue of EU enlargement to the Central and Eastern European countries was selected as an example of an EU issue with thin communication between the political elite and the public. Since 1989, this issue has been on the agenda of various European Council Summits. Apart from some isolated statements in 1990 by the French President Mitterrand and the Commission President Delors, whether the EU should enlarge towards the CEEC was not publicly questioned until after the candidate countries actually integrated into the EU in 2004. The enlargement case will serve as a baseline with which the discourse on the Haider case is compared.

Country & Newspaper Selection

For this empirical illustration, newspaper data files are used that were already coded for research on a European public sphere (see for more details Van de Steeg 2005, 2006; Van de Steeg/Risse 2010). For the Haider case, every third article on this issue was analyzed for two quality newspapers (one left-wing, one right-wing) and a tabloid from five EU member states (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Italy) and for two US quality newspapers. The following newspapers were analyzed: *die Presse*, *der Standard*, *die Neue Kronenzeitung* (NKZ), *de Standaard*, *le Soir*, *le Figaro*, *le Monde*, *le Parisien*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ), *il Corriere*, *la Repubblica*, *la Nazione*, *Washington Post*, and *New York Times* (NYT'). For the CEEC enlargement case, five quality newspapers available in the Microfilm Archive at the Freie Universität Berlin were used that were also coded for the Haider case: the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ), the French *le Figaro* and *le Monde*, and the Italian *la Repubblica*. The other newspapers from the Haider sample were not available for 1998 or 1999, the period just before the Haider case started. The author is aware that this limitation affects the quality of the analysis. On the other hand, an alternative analysis for the time period 1989 to 1998 with two quality newspapers from Germany, Spain, the UK, the Netherlands and one Swiss quality newspaper yielded similar results as the analysis for the period in which the other newspapers were used. Just like for the Haider case, every third article that mentioned the issue of EU enlargement was analyzed from the selected five quality newspapers. The data for the enlargement case will only be used to be able to compare the results from the Haider case with a type of media discourse that one can usually find on an EU issue. Whenever this comparison is made, only the data from the five newspapers that were coded for both cases will be used.

Operationalization of the Dependent Variable

The dependent variable “political behavior of citizens” is measured in the content analysis by coding the following proxies for citizens’ political activities: letters to the editor, reports on demonstrations and manifestations, media statements made by others than professional opinion-makers and other types of reports on citizen involvement, such as public boycotts.

Regarding the letters to the editor, a word of caution is necessary. Since the articles were sampled from digital online archives, it could well be that a newspaper without any letter to the editor on the selected case in the sample did contain some letters to the editor in the printed version of the paper. However, this may not have been included in the digital archive because of copyright considerations. It is, for example, strange to find no letters to the editor at all in the two Belgian and the three French newspapers. In future research, the printed paper or the microform should be used as the basis for sampling.

Here follows the coding tree for the dependent variable with the total number of coded statements for both cases in brackets (each letter to the editor is coded as one statement, but an article with ten sections on ten places where a demonstration was held counts as ten):

Dependent variable: Political behavior citizens

- a. Letter to the editor [CEEC 4; Haider 44]
- b. Demonstrations, petitions, and protests at embassies [CEEC 0; Haider 90]
- c. Citizen as cited actor (only non-professional opinion-makers) [CEEC 0; Haider 32]
 - Austrian [only relevant for Haider case 21]
 - Not Austrian [only relevant for Haider case 11]
- d. Economic and artistic boycotts, effect of boycotts, and actions by artists [CEEC 0; Haider 75]
- e. Other [CEEC 0; Haider 1]

Operationalization of the two Independent Variables

The independent variable “identity” is defined as the mobilization of a “we” against a “they” in relation to a sense of injustice and agency. How is the “we” community discursively mobilized against a “they” and are citizens called upon to defend the “we” community against some wrongdoing? The media discourse was separately coded for all these four elements of an identity discourse, depending on which element could be pointed out in the text. In other words, a statement by a politician or a journalist that mentions a European value community only receives the code “identity-we”. If the statement also includes that Haider is a danger of the European value community, the statement receives two codes: “identity-we” and “identity-they”. Only those articles that contain the identification of an imagined community (either via a “we” or a “they”) in combination with a reference to injustice and agency are considered to be sufficiently loaded for this independent variable. These articles score high on identity. In other words, if any of the three ingredients is missing in a text, it scores low on identity. If not just a text but a single statement within a text contains all ingredients of an identity discourse, it is considered to be even more powerful. However, this distinction is not made in the empirical analysis in this working paper.

The following example received all four identity discourse codes: “imagination of a ‘we’ community”, “imagination of a ‘they’”, “injustice” and “agency”:

[Belgian Foreign Minister Michel:] *‘This man is dangerous’, insists the Foreign Minister. [...] ‘I hope that nobody falls into the classic trap of the extreme right: they try to make themselves acceptable by making believe that they will obey to democratic practices. I hope that nobody forgets the tone, the method, the dishonesty and the lies that those people transmit. So, it does not suffice when they say they ‘repent’ their acts. In cases like this, any kind of forgiving is unjustified’*

[Interviewer:] *‘Should Belgium and the European Union consider calling the ambassador in Vienna home?’*

[Belgian Foreign Minister Michel:] *‘I am actually posing myself this question’, answers Louis Michel, who has had intense contacts with his fellow European ministers and with the Portuguese Presidency of the Union. ‘At a certain moment, we have to consider an extremely resolute action. If not, tomorrow, in the name of what could we still convey the European message of democracy, openness and tolerance?’* (Le Soir, 31 January 2000, first page).

In these two statements, the Belgian Foreign Minister juxtaposes the European “we” community of democracy, openness and tolerance to the common enemy of Haider (who is said to be dangerous) and others from the extreme-right who are dishonest, liars and use abject methods and discourses. In other words, the “they”, against which the “we” defines itself, is not only Haider and his party that may enter into the Austrian government, but also the extreme-right elsewhere in the EU, including Belgium. Their advent to power and any acceptance of people like Haider within the “we” community is an injustice to the values embodied in the “we” community. First, Michel says that no one should forget who “they” really are, any kind of forgiving is unjustified. Subsequently, he poses the rhetorical question, how could “we” still convey who we are and the values that we share, if we would accept people like that amongst our midst? In view of this injustice, the “we” community has to take action, for example by calling the ambassador in Vienna home. Michel assures the interviewer and the reader that he and the other members of the EU leadership are on top of the situation: they will undertake action to defend the “we” community against the danger in our midst. Something can be done to change the situation. Those who consider themselves part of the “we” community can make a difference by standing up against the evil in Austria, Belgium, and elsewhere.

The headlines are only coded for identity when any of the four identity discourse elements was explicitly mentioned. Moreover, the text statements on the selected cases always receive a code that will be used for the analysis of identity. Besides the four identity discourse codes, the code “no identity discourse” was used for statements that were not coded for any of the four identity codes. The coding tree for the independent variable “identity discourse” for the CEEC enlargement and the Haider case with the number of coded statements for each coding between square brackets is:

Independent variable: Identity discourse

- a. No identity discourse [CEEC 9; Haider 292]
- b. Identity related
 1. Identity imagined we [CEEC 1; Haider 200]
 2. Identity imagined they [CEEC 0; Haider 264]
 3. Injustice [CEEC 0; Haider 78]
 4. Agency [CEEC 0; Haider 126]
 5. Other [CEEC 0; Haider 0]

The independent variable “media arousal” is measured by coding in a content analysis several characteristics of media discourse for which media effect research has demonstrated that they activate people in a national setting. This is an indirect measure of arousal creating media discourse. It would have been better to use a more direct measure, but this cannot be done via a content analysis. Moreover, some important characteristics of media discourse that may create arousal, such as photographs and cartoons, could not be included, because the digital version of the newspaper articles from online archives was used. For the same reason we do not know the page on which an article appeared for some of the newspapers in the sample. In future research it is essential to include visual imagery as a measure for media arousal and to select besides newspapers also TV footage, which is known to create more arousal than the print media. All in all, the newspaper articles were coded for the following characteristics that have been empirically proven to activate people by generating arousal (Gamson 1992; Graber 1988; Petty/Cacioppo 1986; Schenk 2002):

- o Catch phrases (for example, a variation on “ich hatte das nicht gewußt” - “I did not know” - to warn against the extreme-right in Europe);
- o Conflict (explicit disagreements; indication of two contrasting camps; words related to war, battles and fights are used);
- o Personal relevance: reference to people like the reader. “However, that will bring us – and here I mean the country and its citizens – [...]” (Der Standard, 27 January 2000); and relevance for the reader as a fellow-national or fellow-European “But we all have, with our own national characteristics and in various dimensions, our own Haider.” (La Repubblica, 1 February 2000);
- o Authority figures (national Prime Ministers and Presidents, the Commission President, the Austrian President, the Belgian Foreign Affairs Minister when he is presented as the main anti-Haider spokesperson, Jewish leaders when a comment is made on the Holocaust – the Austrian ÖVP Prime Minister is not coded as an authority figure, since his authority was seriously put into question);
- o Emotional appeal “[...]the possible future Foreign Minister called upon all critics to leave the ‘realm of emotions’ and to return to ‘objectiveness’” (Die Presse, 29 January 2000);
- o Prominence: headline on the selected case, plural instead of a single headline, first page, and the newspaper’s comments; and
- o Rhetorical questions.

The coding tree for the two independent variables “identity” and “media arousal” with for each coding in square brackets the number of coded statements for the CEEC enlargement and the Haider case respectively is:

Independent variable: Media arousal

- a. Headline
 1. Single headline [CEEC 0; Haider 42]
 2. Plural headline [CEEC 0; Haider 75]
 3. Headline on other issue [CEEC 10; Haider 10]
- b. Page 1 (and for le Monde the dernier page too) [CEEC 1; Haider 131]
- c. Other prominent place, such as newspaper's comment [CEEC 0; Haider 21]
- d. Conflict [2; 172]
- e. Personal relevance: reference to 'you' and people like the reader [CEEC 0; Haider 9]
- f. Personal relevance: reference to the reader as a fellow-national or a fellow-European [CEEC 0; Haider 23]
- g. Authority figures [CEEC 3; Haider 100]
- h. Emotional appeal [CEEC 0; Haider 19]
- i. Rhetorical question [CEEC 0; Haider 46]
- j. Catch phrase [CEEC 0; Haider 3]
- k. Automatic search for "Nazi", a word that creates arousal [CEEC 0; Haider 177]
- l. Automatic search for "fascism", a word that creates arousal [CEEC 0; Haider 79]
- m. Automatic search for "Hitler" and "Third Reich", words that create arousal [CEEC 0; Haider 168]
- n. Automatic search for "Holocaust" and "Shoah", words that create arousal [CEEC 0; Haider 98]
- o. Automatic search for "Stockholm Holocaust Conference" [CEEC 0; Haider 37]
- p. Other [CEEC 0; Haider 0]

For the newspapers published outside of the EU, i.e. in the US, both independent variables were only coded for those statements that were either made by the author of the article or by somebody from respectively the US political community. The reason for this coding decision is that both issues are part of an Europeanized public sphere that does not extent to the US. In an Europeanized public sphere, the political community of the various EU member states are in discussion with each other on how to deal with these political problems (Van de Steeg 2005, 2006; Van de Steeg/Risse 2010). In other words, within the various EU member states both issues are discussed as if they were domestic issues, domestic EU issues in this case. Instead, in the US, these two issues are reported on as a foreign affair. The US newspapers quote the statements made by the European leadership, including the statements in which the fourteen EU leaders call for something to be done against Haider, the epitome of Europe's dark past. However, the US political community is conspicuous for their absence in the columns of their respective newspapers; whereas in the newspapers printed in anyone of the EU member states, the political communities of both the country itself and from other member states are quoted on both these issues. Just as we do not expect US citizens to be politically activated when their newspapers report on French trade unionists who call for a general strike in France, we should not expect them to become engaged after reading the emotionally loaded statements made by EU political entrepreneurs. Highly emotionally loaded or not, these two issues do not concern their political community. In other words, coding the emotionally loaded statements made elsewhere would distort the research results.

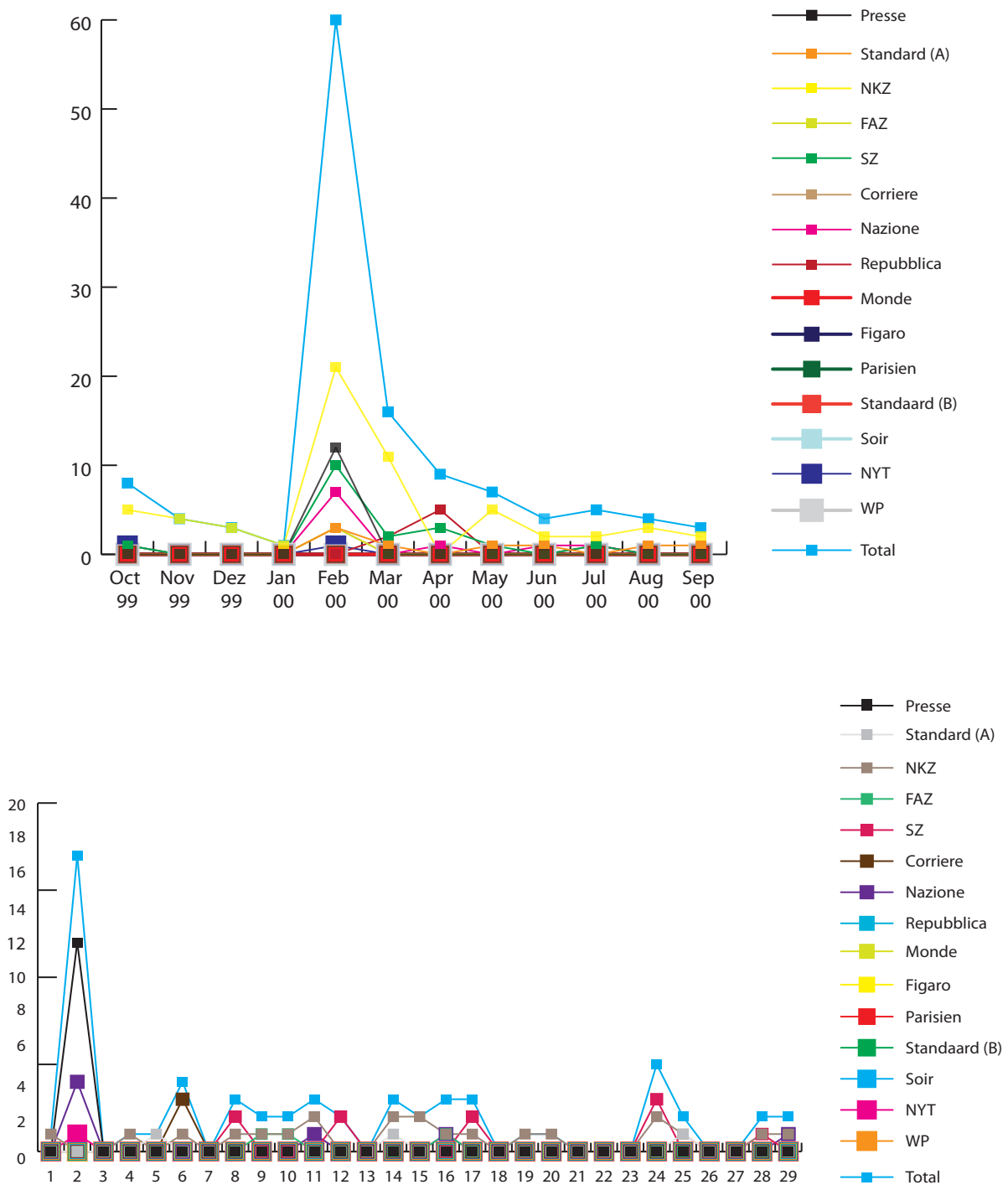
Sample Period

The aim of this research project is to relate a sudden rise in mobilization on an EU issue to the media discourse immediately prior to that peak in citizen involvement. Establishing the pivotal point between “before” and “after” is crucial to select the sampling period for both the independent and the dependent variables. What is the best and most efficient manner to establish the moment mobilization on an EU issue begins? A perfect manner would be to measure all the indicators for citizen mobilization for a longer period and then establish on the basis of the cycle in mobilization at what point the highest peak in citizen mobilization started. A more efficient manner is to use one of the indicators that can most easily be measured. The letters to the editor are used as a proxy for citizen engagement with EU politics. It is assumed that in the period when most letters to the editor are published on a certain issue, this issue is amongst the top political issues discussed by the citizens in their daily lives. In order to establish the sampling period, first, a graph is made with, for each week, the number of letters to the editor. The highest peak in the graph of letters to the editor is identified. For sampling purposes, the day of the highest peak is $t=0$.

The sample period was selected on the basis of the newspaper data files used for previous research on a European public sphere. Again, this brings about some limitations. The data file on the Haider affair contains every third article published from October 1999 to September 2000. It would have been better to have access to all newspaper articles published in a certain period, but this has to do as a plausibility probe. As can be seen in Graphs 1 and 2 of the number of the letters to the editor, the highest peak for the Haider sample is on 2 February 2000. This date will be used as the pivotal point between the media discourse “before” citizen mobilization started and the “after” of citizen political actions as reported by the media. Thereby, 2 February 2000 is considered as the $t=0$ for the Haider case.

The sampling period for the CEEC enlargement is selected in a similar manner as the sampling period for the Haider case. The aim is to establish a $t=0$ that lies as close as possible to the $t=0$ for the Haider case. Although it is expected that before the $t=0$ of the Haider case, i.e. February 2000, the EU enlargement did not lead to the amount of citizen mobilization as the Haider case – something that is common to most EU issues – the same question as for the Haider case is asked: At which moment did EU enlargement lead to most citizen involvement? For the CEEC enlargement case, besides the five selected newspapers obtained from the Microfilm Archive, I also used a data file with every eighth article from a newspaper selection that had only two newspapers in common to the selection for the Haider case and that ran from 1989 to 1998. In the Microfilm Archive, going through the letters to the editor published between September 1999 and December 1999 – just before public attention moved towards the Haider case – it was clear that at the time, letters to the editor that mentioned EU enlargement with the CEEC were as scarce as during the period from 1989 to 1997 and with a timing that did not follow EU decision-making on enlargement. All in all, the peak in letters to the editor in 1998 established on the basis of the old file could never be matched by a new search for January 1999 to February 2000 in the five selected newspapers: three on 18 June 1998 in the SZ and one a few days later in the FAZ. Subsequently, 18 June 1998 is regarded as $t=0$ for the CEEC enlargement sample. In future research, the EU issue with which the issue with much citizen mobilization is compared should be selected in another manner, so that the $t=0$ for both cases are closer to each other and time as an intervening variable could have been kept constant. All these precautions cannot be undertaken; therefore the results of this exercise will be regarded merely as an empirical example, not as valid evidence.

Graphs 1 and 2: Letters to the editor in the sample of the Haider case: first, each month in the sample, then, each day for the month with most letters to the editor



For the dependent variable, for each issue, the articles of the first two weeks starting from the $t=0$ are analyzed. This is 18 June to 1 July 1998 for the CEEC enlargement case and 2 to 15 February 2000 for the Haider case. The media discourse is coded for the proxies for citizens' political action, as discussed in the section on operationalization.

For the independent variables “identity” and “media arousal”, for each issue, the articles and news shows in the two weeks prior to each issue’s $t=0$ are sampled. This is 4 to 17 June 1998 for the CEEC enlargement case and 19 January to 2 February 2000 for the Haider case. The media discourse is coded for “identity” as well as “media arousal”, as discussed in the operationalization.

5. Independent Variables: Media Arousal and Identity Discourse

As was expected, media arousal was very low and identity discourse was scarcely present for the standard EU issue, the CEEC enlargement case. A first indication is that the sample to measure the independent variables for the CEEC enlargement case contained significantly less articles, namely ten, than for the Haider case (57 in the same newspapers as selected for CEEC enlargement; 127 in the whole newspaper sample). Moreover, most of the ten articles on the CEEC enlargement case only mentioned the EU issue in a few lines. This hardly draws the reader’s attention to this EU issue and provides little space for an identity discourse. The CEEC enlargement is one of those issues that are recurrently on the EU agenda, but are not fervently discussed in the public arena. From the media discourse, a picture arises of something that has to be done and kept in mind, but not something for which a difference of opinion and preferences can be imagined.

The public debate on the Haider affair was unleashed by the same political elite as the non-debate on CEEC enlargement - and to a limited extent even the same politicians were in power. Nevertheless, the public debate on the Haider affair was diametrically opposed to that on the standard EU issue: for a while, Haider and the extreme-right in Europe were a hot issue. This is reflected in the high number of articles and in the high score on both independent variables. The European Haider affair started when on 27 and 28 January 2000, in the aftermath of the Holocaust conference held in Sweden, several political leaders warned about the dangerous development in the heart of Europe. In other words, in the beginning the Haider affair was an EU issue with top-down communication, as this is often the case for EU issues.

The difference was that the top-down communication did not contain the usual toned-down statements on policies, decisions, or political positions. The media discourse on the Haider affair had a different quality. Subsequently, citizens across Europe acted accordingly and the weak public became engaged on this issue. Moreover, before the public eye, politicians and other opinion makers argued vividly in favor of sanctions in order to stop the ÖVP-FPÖ government, or against the exaggerated and undemocratic sanctions. Unlike for the CEEC enlargement, this was an EU issue on which a difference of opinion was put on the table. The difference of opinion and the arguing in favor of one’s position on the matter that could be discerned in the public discussion of the strong public of decision-makers is reflected in the reactions of the citizens, i.e. the weak public. The process on how the Haider affair turned from an EU issue for which almost all participants cited in the media reports were politicians into an issue on which also the weak public was given the floor can be traced by analyzing the media discourse. If the assumptions derived from collective action and media arousal theory are correct, immediately prior to the moment that the weak public became actively involved, we should expect certain key media interventions in which citizens are called upon to become involved.

Table 1: Overview for both cases scored on the independent variable media arousal

| | CEEC enlargement | Haider affair |
|--|---|--|
| Maximum score | Statement by an authority figure in a front page article with a headline that does not refer to the CEEC enlargement case: <i>FAZ</i> 15 June 1998. | Statement that indicates a conflict, made by an authority figure, that includes a rhetorical question and an emotional appeal in an article on page 1 with a plural headline on the Haider case that also mentions a conflict, an authority figure and an emotional appeal: All these characteristics can be found in one of the statements made by Belgian Foreign Minister Michel in an interview in <i>le Soir</i> 31 January 2000. This interview contains five other statements with at least three media arousal codings: twice conflict, authority figure and emotional appeal; once conflict, authority and a rhetorical question; and once conflict, authority and reference to the reader as a fellow national. |
| Media arousal high | Indication of a conflict in combination with at least one of the other media arousal codings in an article which headline mentions the CEEC enlargement. The article has at least a plural headline or is placed in a prominent position of the paper: None. | Indication of a conflict in combination with at least one of the other media arousal codings in an article which headline mentions the Haider case. The article has at least a plural headline or is placed in a prominent position: 53 statements in 28 articles in 10 newspapers: <i>die Presse</i> , <i>der Standard</i> , <i>de Standaard</i> , <i>le Soir</i> , <i>FAZ</i> , <i>SZ</i> , <i>il Corriere</i> , <i>la Repubblica</i> , <i>le Figaro</i> , <i>le Monde</i> . |
| Date first article media arousal high | Not applicable. | <i>Die Presse</i> 27 January 2000; <i>der Standard</i> : 27 January; <i>de Standaard</i> : 28 January; <i>le Soir</i> : 26 January; <i>FAZ</i> : 27 January; <i>SZ</i> : 27 January; <i>il Corriere</i> : 1 February; <i>la Repubblica</i> : 30 January; <i>le Figaro</i> 1 February; <i>le Monde</i> : 1 February. |
| Newspapers with only low media arousal articles | All newspapers. | <i>NKZ</i> , <i>la Nazione</i> , <i>le Parisien</i> , <i>Washington Post</i> , <i>NYT</i> . |
| Maximum score for newspapers with only low media arousal articles | Several media arousal indicators never appeared in the CEEC enlargement case. <i>FAZ</i> : a statement by an authority figure in a front page article. <i>SZ</i> : none of the media arousal indicators. <i>La Repubblica</i> : one statement indicating a conflict. <i>Le Figaro</i> : two statements by an authority figure in a single article. <i>Le Monde</i> : two articles with each one statement by an authority figure | Indication of a conflict in combination with at least one of the other media arousal codings in an article whose single headline mentions the Haider case: <i>La Nazione</i> : 1 statement. <i>Le Parisien</i> : 1 statement. In the <i>NKZ</i> there were only articles on the case with single headlines and there was never an indication of a conflict, nor any reference to authority figures. The maximum media arousal for the <i>NKZ</i> : one statement refers to normal people such as the reader, two statements in two articles contain a rhetorical question. Page 1 articles with a single headline: 2 articles <i>Washington Post</i> , 4 articles <i>NYT</i> . |

First, the two cases are compared in Table 1 for the independent variable “media arousal”. A statement is expected to have a higher chance to be noted and processed by the reader when it has at least the following characteristics:

1. It exhibits the indication of a conflict;
2. It is combined with at least one other media arousal coding (see operationalization);
3. It is contained in an article with a headline that refers to the selected issue; and either the article has a headline that consists of several lines or the article is placed in a prominent position of the newspaper, such as the first page.

Media arousal is considered as being high for the statements that fulfill all four conditions. Everything else is regarded as low media arousal. While none of the articles on CEEC enlargement contained statements that could be expected to create sufficient arousal to activate citizens, the Haider case displays a mirror image, as can be seen in Table 1, above. In all EU member states, newspapers were published that drew much attention to the Haider case via the media arousal characteristics. The article with the statement with most media arousal characteristics appeared in an interview of Belgian Foreign Minister Michel published by *le Soir* on 31 January 2000. The headline of this interview published on the front page already announced that an authority figure, Belgian Minister Louis Michel, would ring the alarm bell and raise awareness for the conflict that arose in the heart of Europe. Apart from that, this interview contained various other statements with characteristics that are known to draw citizens’ attention and to activate a deeper reflection on the issue. Besides *le Soir*, nine other EU newspapers contained statements that fulfill at least all four conditions for “high media arousal”. In Austria, Belgium, and Germany, the first high media arousal articles on the Haider case already appeared on 26 and 27 January, immediately in the aftermath of the Swedish Holocaust Conference at which many European leaders were present. The Italian and French newspapers followed a few days later with the first prominent articles on the affair. By the 1st February, the readers of the ten EU newspapers with high media arousal articles could hardly have missed that something was going on in Europe.

In accordance with collective action theory, identity discourse is considered to be present when the following three ingredients are explicitly mentioned: a community that suffers from an injustice bestowed upon it, but whose situation can improve if the members of the community undertake action. In other words, an identity discourse consists of a combination of injustice, agency and either the identification of a “we” community or the indication of a “they” as the common adversarial. Although the example from the Haider case given in the operationalization contained all four codes for identity discourse, it still counts as identity discourse if only the “we” or only the “they” is explicitly indicated in combination with agency and injustice.

The main picture is rather similar for the second independent variable, “identity”, as it was for the independent variable “media arousal”. While at the beginning of the Haider affair newspapers in all EU member states contained many articles with identity discourse, identity discourse was absent in relation to enlargement with the CEEC, as can be seen in Table 2. Of all ten articles, one article in *le Monde* (6 June 1998) contained a reference to a “we”-community when citing Laurent Fabius, the Presidency of the National Assembly: “[By enlarging,] Europe acquires a new dimension, a new maturity, and will need to

specify its identity.” This is a rather weak manner of invoking a “we” with which the reader may identify. Moreover, collective action theory tells us that the necessary ingredients of injustice and agency are missing. In 1998 – or for that matter between 1989 and 2004 – the European decision-makers did not want citizens to become politically active on CEEC enlargement. Politicization of this issue in the public sphere would have made it more difficult to reach consensus and close the enlargement negotiations with the candidate countries. For a long time, a lack of citizens’ political involvement has made it possible for the European leadership to find agreements to push forward European integration. Therefore, it is to be expected that on many other EU issues, we can also detect a similar lack of identity discourse.

Table 2: Overview for both cases scored on the independent variable identity discourse

| | CEEC enlargement | Haider affair |
|---|---|---|
| Maximum score | One of the ingredients of identity discourse: Indication “we” community: one statement in <i>le Monde</i> 6 June 1998. | All codes for the identity discourse: Indication “we” community, indication “they”, injustice and agency: 27 statements in 20 articles in 8 newspapers. |
| Identity discourse high | Absent in all articles. | Indication of a “we” and/or a “they” in combination with both injustice and agency: 37 statements in 25 articles in 10 newspapers: <i>der Standard</i> , <i>de Standaard</i> , <i>le Soir</i> , <i>FAZ</i> , <i>SZ</i> , <i>Il Corriere</i> , <i>la Repubblica</i> , <i>le Monde</i> , <i>le Parisien</i> , <i>Washington Post</i> . |
| Identity discourse high Date first article identity discourse high | Not applicable. | <i>Der Standard</i> : 29 January 2000; <i>de Standaard</i> : 28 January; <i>le Soir</i> : 26 January; <i>FAZ</i> : 27 January; <i>SZ</i> : 26 January; <i>il Corriere</i> : 26 January; <i>la Repubblica</i> : 30 January; <i>le Monde</i> : 28 January; <i>le Parisien</i> : 29 January; <i>Washington Post</i> : 30 January. |
| Newspapers with articles with only identity discourse low | All newspapers in sample. | <i>Die Presse</i> , <i>NKZ</i> , <i>la Nazione</i> , <i>le Figaro</i> , <i>NYT</i> . |
| Maximum score for newspapers with only identity discourse low articles | One “we” community statement in <i>le Monde</i> 6 June 1998. | Indication of a “we” and/or a “they” in combination with either injustice or agency: <i>die Presse</i> 9 statements in 5 articles; <i>la Nazione</i> 1 statement; <i>le Figaro</i> 4 statements in 1 article. One indication of a “they” in <i>NKZ</i> and <i>NYT</i> on 1 February. |

Surprisingly for an issue put on the public agenda by the mainstream European leadership, the media discourse on the Haider affair is full of articles with identity discourse. Eight newspapers contained statements that have a maximum score for identity discourse by referring to all four elements: the indication of a “we” against a “they” in relation to a sense of injustice and agency. For a statement to score high on identity, it would have been sufficient if there is a reference to either a “we” or a “they” in relation to a sense of injustice and agency. In many articles published in the beginning of the affair, statements and sometimes even headlines contained at least three of the four elements of an identity discourse. In

Belgian, German and Italian newspapers this started immediately in the aftermath of the international Holocaust Conference. The left wing newspapers from Austria and France followed a few days later. In each newspaper, the first article with an identity discourse used this to underline the necessity to fight Haider and likeminded people. Even the *FAZ*, the newspaper that from the start of the Haider affair warned against exaggerated reactions that could damage the rules and values embodied in the EU, contained this identity discourse. The *FAZ*, just like the other newspapers, cited the statements full of identity discourse with which the European leaders at the Holocaust Conference told the European citizens that there was a danger threatening the European value community and that something could be done about it.

Table 3: Overview for both cases when the two independent variables are combined

| | CEEC enlargement | Haider affair |
|---|--|---|
| Maximum score media arousal & identity | Article with the maximum score for media arousal was published in another newspaper than the only article with one of the elements of an identity discourse. | <i>Le Soir</i> 31 January 2000: highest media arousal & all four identity codes. |
| Media arousal high & identity discourse high | None. | The same statement scores high on both independent variables: <i>Der Standard</i> 4 statements in 3 articles; <i>le Soir</i> 4 statements in 2 articles. An article contains statements with high media arousal and other statements with high identity discourse: <i>De Standaard</i> 1 article; <i>le Soir</i> 2 articles; <i>FAZ</i> 1 article; <i>SZ</i> 1 article; <i>la Repubblica</i> 1 article; <i>le Monde</i> 1 article. |
| Date first article media arousal high & identity discourse high | Not applicable. | <i>Der Standard</i> : 29 January 2000; <i>de Standaard</i> : 28 January; <i>le Soir</i> : 26 January; <i>FAZ</i> : 27 January; <i>SZ</i> : 28 January; <i>la Repubblica</i> : 30 January; <i>le Monde</i> : 1 February. |
| Newspapers with either articles with low media arousal & identity discourse high, or with high media arousal & low identity discourse. | None. | Articles with low media arousal & high discourse in: <i>il Corriere</i> , <i>le Parisien</i> , <i>Washington Post</i> . Articles with high media arousal & low identity discourse in: <i>Die Presse</i> ; <i>il Corriere</i> ; <i>le Figaro</i> . |
| Newspapers with only articles with low media arousal & low identity discourse. | All newspapers. | <i>NKZ</i> ; <i>la Nazione</i> ; <i>NYT</i> . |

When media effect and collective action research are combined, we would expect that statements with identity discourse that are made in a manner creating the kind of arousal catches people's attention, have most chances to have any effect on how citizens discuss politics or become politically active in other ways. Since media arousal and identity discourse were absent in relation to EU enlargement, we should not expect citizens to be mobilized on this issue. Instead, on the basis of the findings presented in Table 3, we should expect quite some mobilization for the Haider case.

The findings for "media arousal" and for "identity discourse" are put together in Table . The Austrian left-wing newspaper *der Standard* and the Belgian French language left-wing newspaper *le Soir* contained most statements that were well suited to activate their readership to become politically engaged. The two German quality newspapers, the other Belgian newspaper, and the Italian and French left-wing newspapers followed suit with one or two articles that contained high media arousal as well as high identity discourse statements. These articles are expected to have been capable to mobilize citizens. However, to indicate the direction in which they could have mobilized, we have to look at the content. In all these articles, except for one article in *der Standard* (statements made by the leaders of the ÖVP and the FPÖ) and one article in *le Soir* (statements made by the President of the Commission and the ÖVP leader), Haider and others like him were depicted as the enemy and a call is made for sanctions to prevent the Austrian politicians of the ÖVP to open the door to power to the FPÖ. In view of these findings, we should expect most citizen mobilization in Austria and the Walloon provinces in Belgium. On the other hand, mobilization is likely to extend across the EU, as newspapers from all five EU countries contained articles capable to activate people. Instead, we should not expect mobilization in the US.

6. The Dependent Variable: Political Behavior of Citizens

In the analyzed media discourse on the CEEC enlargement presented in Table 4, political activities by citizens are almost nonexistent, although the period with most letters to the editor before the Haider case became a public affair was selected. It is noteworthy that just like in the main articles, in the letters to the editor, CEEC enlargement was mentioned as one of the projects on which the EU is working, as an issue on the political agenda, but it is not the main issue. In the letters to the editor, just like in the main articles, another issue was discussed, and in passing a link was made with EU enlargement.

In contrast, all analyzed letters to the editor published in relation to the Haider affair were fully dedicated to this issue. Some letters were written in favor of the sanctions, but most letters – especially in the three newspapers with most letters to the editor – were written by those who thought that the European reactions were wrong and that Austria was unjustly attacked. In the case of the Italian *la Nazione*, the background of at least one of the authors would not have convinced those who warned of the danger of Haider and people like him: the provincial leader of MSI (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*, formerly Mussolini's party).

Apart from letters to the editor, other frequently reported actions by citizens during the Haider affair were: mass demonstrations by citizens against Haider, very small demonstrations by citizens in support of Haider, protests at Austrian embassies (in favor and against Haider), economic and touristic boycotts and their possible consequences, boycotts by artists, artists who took a stand, and a mass organized by an Austrian

bishop. In Austria and in Belgium a special organization was founded to coordinate the manifestations and other forms of protest against the entry of the FPÖ into government. Twice, *le Soir* printed a long article listing anti-Haider activities in all of Walloon's cities. Apart from *le Soir*, newspapers that often report on demonstrations, boycotts and other types of citizen action were the *SZ*, *der Standard*, and to a lesser extent *de Standaard*, *FAZ*, *la Repubblica*, and *la Nazione*.

Table 4: Overview for the two cases with the scores on the dependent variable

| | CEEC enlargement | Haider affair |
|---|--|---|
| Letter to the editor – top 4 | All letters to the editor actually deal with another issue, but mention the CEEC enlargement briefly. <i>SZ</i> (3; all link EU enlargement to <i>Vertriebenen</i> , the Sudeten Germans); <i>FAZ</i> (1; links enlargement to <i>Vertriebenen</i>). | All letters to the editor focus on the Haider affair. <i>Die Presse</i> (12; all against sanctions); <i>NKZ</i> (11; all against sanctions); <i>la Nazione</i> (7; all against sanctions); <i>SZ</i> (6; 3 against Haider; 3 against sanctions). |
| First letter to the editor | Not applicable: No series of letters to the editor that discuss CEEC enlargement. | Before t=0: <i>NKZ</i> 24 January 2000; After t=0, within the sampling period for citizen mobilization: <i>Die Presse</i> and <i>la Nazione</i> 2 February. |
| Demonstration & protest – top 4 | None. | <i>Le Soir</i> (16 statements; 15 against Haider, 1 against sanctions); <i>SZ</i> (10 statements; 9 against Haider, 1 against sanctions); <i>FAZ</i> (8 statements; all against Haider); <i>la Repubblica</i> (7 statements; 5 against Haider, 2 against sanctions). |
| First demonstration or protest | Not applicable. | Before t=0: 31 January 2000 demonstration in Brussels; After t=0, within the sampling period for citizen mobilization: Daily demonstrations in Vienna starting 2 February. |
| Economic or artistic boycott & actions and statements by artists – top 4 | None. | <i>Der Standard</i> (14; all against Haider); <i>SZ</i> (10; all against Haider); <i>de Standaard</i> (9; all against Haider); <i>la Nazione</i> (7; all against Haider). |
| First boycott or action by artists | Not applicable. | Before t=0: 27 January 2000 Moitier and Bondy consider resigning from the position of director of respectively an music and a theatre festival; After t=0, within the sampling period for citizen mobilization: 2 February: open letter to the ÖVP leader by an Austrian actor and an action plan of the Chamber of Commerce to prevent economic damage. |

7. Does a Media Discourse loaded high with Emotions precede Citizens' Political Behavior?

Even though, because of several fallacies in the research design, it is not possible to draw any definite conclusion from this empirical illustration, the two cases demonstrate that the postulated relation between emotions in media discourse and subsequent political mobilization of citizens is not farfetched. As can be seen in Table 5, at least for the two media samples analyzed in this working paper, there is a clear coincidence between, on the one hand, articles that contain many characteristics that create arousal and remind the reader of the identity of a community for which he/she has to fight, and, on the other hand, reported political activities that have actually taken place a few days to a week later. As expected, in the countries of the two newspapers with most statements with high media arousal and much identity discourse, most political activities by citizens were reported: Austrian and the Walloon provinces of Belgium. However, activities and reports on politically active citizens were found in all selected EU member states.

Moreover, most letters to the editor against the European reaction on Austrian politics and against the sanctions appeared in the two newspapers that scored low on both independent variables: *NKZ* and *la Nazione*. The third newspaper that opened a platform for Austrians who felt to be unjustly treated by the Europeans is *die Presse*. This newspaper contained articles that score high on media arousal, but low on identity discourse. The high score for media arousal is related to various comments by the editor and other journalists of the paper who indicate in a prominent position of the newspaper that there is a conflict between the Austrian government and many Austrians, on the one hand, and the Austrian socialists, their European friends, and the Austrian President, on the other. Besides prominence and conflict, these well written pieces contained arousal devices such as rhetorical questions and relating to the reader by referring to personal relevance.

The only dissonant is France. *Le Monde* was amongst the newspapers that scored high on both independent variables. Moreover, the French President was one of the three politicians who boosted the Haider affair and created a Europe-wide debate out of what had been a merely Austrian issue just before the Holocaust Conference. Nevertheless, the sample of the three French newspapers does not contain any letter to the editor and hardly any report on citizens' actions. Nor do the other newspapers report on demonstrations or boycotts in France, or statements by artists who are engaged in this cause. The only political activity related to France – mentioned by *der Standard* and the *NYT* – is a protest organized by the extreme right (Mégret, former Front National) at the Austrian embassy in Paris.

Table 5: Theoretical expectations and an illustration of empirical reality

| | CEEC enlargement | Haider affair |
|--|---|--|
| Theoretical expectation | Independent & dependent variables: low. | Independent & dependent variables: high. |
| Independent variables: Media arousal & identity discourse | Low. | High in newspapers from all EU member states: <i>Der Standard; le Soir; de Standaard; FAZ; SZ; la Repubblica; le Monde.</i> |
| Dependent variable: Political activities citizens | Absent, i.e. low. | Present in newspapers from all EU member states but France: <i>Der Standard, die Presse, le Soir, SZ, de Standaard, FAZ, la Repubblica, and la Nazione.</i> |

More research – and, especially, more sophisticated research – is needed to establish whether the findings presented in this paper were a pure coincidence. While CEEC enlargement serves well as a representative example of an EU issue, the Haider affair is a rather particular case, which might have been a one-off. So far, this is the only issue for which the political elite was able to engage citizens in support of the EU. Moreover, several words that were closely linked to the Haider affair, such as Nazism, fascism, Hitler and the Holocaust, have by themselves already an arousing and identity mobilizing quality. These words were used more than 400 times in the Haider sample. In media effect research it is said that sex sells. Probably also these words that remind us of Europe's dark history "sell". These words are by themselves already loaded with emotions and able to reach the reader's heart. It is difficult to imagine other EU issues than the advent to power of the extreme-right that can be linked to words that are as emotionally powerful as these. This could mean that it is more difficult to mobilize European citizens on other issues, resulting in less political action for the same amount of media arousal and identity discourse. Of course, this expectation needs to be tested empirically.

Another issue that is left open is the status of the independent variables. Are media arousal and identity discourse (as operationalized in this research paper) really the two main necessary variables? Is it true that any of these alone is not sufficient, but that when they emerge in combination are sufficient to bring about citizens' political engagement? We need to analyze more cases with a high and with a low level of citizen involvement in order to make sure that it is the combination of media arousal and identity discourse which engages citizens on an EU issue.

8. Conclusion

European integration will remain politicized for a foreseeable future. Citizens are now aware of what European integration entails and have formed an idea on how European politics impact upon their lives. Right or wrong, for many citizens the European Union has become a synonym for bureaucracy, liberalization of markets, deterioration of employment, and a rise in prices due to the introduction of the Euro. The European political elite cannot expect a return to passive citizen support for EU integration.

Those political entrepreneurs who can mobilize citizens around their ideas on the European Union's future will be able to set the political agenda for European decision-making in the years to come. Political entrepreneurs from civil society and from anti-establishment parties have been able to mobilize citizens to challenge European decision-making. Nevertheless, the mobilization of citizens does not necessarily need to imply mobilization against European decision-making or *against* the present state of the European Union. In February 2000, with the entry of Haider's FPÖ into the Austrian government, citizens in Brussels, Pisa, Vienna and elsewhere took to the streets to defend the values represented by what they felt to be *their* European Union. The high mobilization case chosen for the plausibility probe presented in this paper was so far the only example of mainstream parties providing the leadership in mobilizing citizens in favor of European integration. Without more discursive interaction on EU issues between citizens and the elected representatives who decide on European integration in the name of these same citizens, the only presence on the political battlefield is the "no" camp. Independent of what we as citizens think of the present state of the European Union, does this assure us of the Europe we want?

The effect that media discourse on EU issues has on European societies is a young but promising research line. In the research program presented in this working paper, a political science research interest is married to literatures on collective action and media effect research. The aim of this research program is to unravel the mechanism that explains when and how citizens become politically active on EU issues – be it to defend the EU "we"-community, be it to attack the EU in case it is cast as the enemy. The illustrative empirical analysis presented as a plausibility probe confirmed the theoretical model developed in this paper. However, before we can reach any definite conclusions on the effect of the emotional loading of media discourse on the European citizens' political behavior we have to wait for the results from a more thorough analysis to be conducted. The study of how politicians and other political entrepreneurs communicate via the media with European citizens is a promising new research area.

Indeed, it cannot be denied anymore that communicative interaction between citizens and their elected representatives is just as essential for democratic decision-making in EU multi-level governance as it is in national contexts. In many respects, EU multi-level governance may be different from national politics. However, this research program wants to demonstrate empirically that there are no structural imperatives that impede politicians to communicate their political positions and to debate with their citizens on EU issues. If we want informed consent, that is, if we want citizens to be aware of what European integration entails, then communication on EU issues should have an activating quality. Only then, citizens will form an opinion on EU issues, and express their by talking to family, friends and neighbors, or by participating in a political action. The communication by certain politicians and trade unionists on the Haider affair, the Constitutional Treaty and the Bolkestein directive probably had this activating quality, since suddenly many citizens became politically involved on these issues. The theoretical model presented in this paper indicates that what makes the difference between the usual manner of communicating Europe and those few instances that citizens became engaged and consolidated their attitudes by being politically active, is media reporting on Europe that is loaded with emotions.

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